

# Captioning at EPA

## What is captioning?

Captioning is the process of displaying text of spoken words or other audio (e.g., sounds, music, or other non-speech elements) on a screen, monitor, or other visual display system for multimedia and live events (e.g., videos, webinars, on-line trainings, presentations). The noun “captions” and the verb “captioning” are often used interchangeably.

## Why does EPA provide captioning and who uses it?

Federal laws, including Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, mandate that people with disabilities have access to the same information that someone without a disability would have. Section 508 requires that training and multimedia be captioned which ultimately benefits a variety of people regardless of whether or not they have a permanent hearing loss. People use captioning in professional, leisure, and social situations for a variety of reasons.

Captions are used by:

- Deaf and hard-of-hearing people
- People who have trouble hearing for any other reason (e.g., in a noisy environment or in a large group meeting)
- People who speak English as a second language



*Administrator Gina McCarthy's online YouTube video includes captioning.*

## Are captions, transcripts, subtitles, and CART the same thing?

**Captions** display text and convey information about the audio content, including (but not limited to) identifying the speaker, noting background noises or music, etc. Captions are required to be synchronized, meaning the captions must match what is being said at that particular moment. Live captioning has a slight synchronization delay of a few seconds. If the captions are presented in real time, there is likely to be a higher incidence of typos and errors.

**Transcripts** provide the text of what was said in an event or multimedia presentation and are used to develop captions for multimedia presentations (required for EPA's YouTube channel) and for recorded events that were not live captioned, but will be captioned afterwards. Because transcripts are not typically synchronized to the audio, transcripts do not substitute for captions. Note: Transcripts can be provided for recorded audio-only events, such as a podcast or a radio broadcast, since there is no visual information to synchronize with the transcript.

**Subtitles** are typically used for displaying the translation of spoken foreign languages in movies or TV. Subtitles typically transcribe only spoken dialogue, without reference to the context of who is speaking or other audio content (e.g., music, background noises, etc.) that a deaf or hard-of-hearing person may need for full comprehension.

**CART (Communication Access RealTime Translation)** is a speech-to-text interpreting service for anyone who needs communication access, and provides live captioning either in person or remotely through the Internet. The CART provider transcribes what is being said into text that is displayed either on a presentation screen or online. The way in which captions are displayed depends on the event and other logistical considerations.

# Captioning Requirements

## What is the difference between open and closed captioning?

**Open captioning** requires no additional action from the viewer because the captions are automatically displayed and everyone can view the captions. Open captioning is the preferred option for EPA events that require captioning. Open captions are used in a variety of settings such as TV monitors or kiosks in an office, lobby, museum, and other public space or events where a large number of people who are not deaf or hard-of-hearing but may have trouble hearing the information would also benefit. Open captioning is typically used for live events.

**Closed captioning** requires the viewer to turn the captions on or off manually. A person who needs captions typically looks for the captioning symbol or a “CC” and turns the closed captions on. If your office has a compelling reason to use closed captions rather than open captions, you must indicate this in the communication, webpage, or the event with a message such as: *NOTE: If you need captions, please click the CC button to turn them on.*

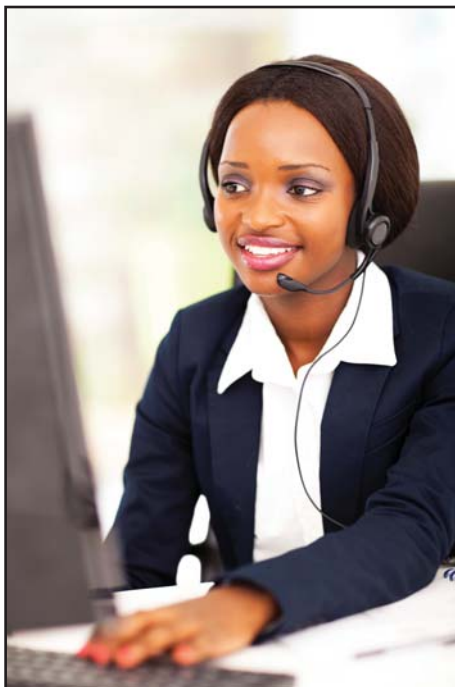


## When is captioning required at EPA?

Section 508 is a federal law and set of standards that requires electronic and information technology (EIT) to be accessible to people with disabilities. Specifically, Section 1194.24(c) of the Section 508 Standards requires captioning for all training or informational video and multimedia productions that support the Agency's mission and have audio information necessary for the comprehension of the content.

**Live events broadcast across the Agency and to the public: open captioning is required.** Live events include town hall meetings, public hearings, symposia,

press briefings, etc. EPA events, either internal or external to EPA and involving the Administrator or senior leadership, are always open captioned.



**Live webinars, video conferences, or training: provide captioning as needed** for webinars (using software like Adobe Connect, GoToMeeting, etc.). The host must provide an opportunity for participants to request captions. When communicating about the webinar, ask participants well in advance to communicate any reasonable accommodation needs (changes or adjustments made for persons with disabilities). Suggested reasonable accommodation language is found on page 4 of this guide. The point of contact for requesting a reasonable accommodation must be clear on the announcements, flyers, invitation, etc. If captions have been requested (for webinars only), contact Sarah Rauber, EPA Interpreter Services Coordinator at [rauber.sarah@epa.gov](mailto:rauber.sarah@epa.gov) to arrange for services.

**Webinars that will be recorded and posted online: must be captioned when posted online.** The most efficient method to caption webinars is to use CART services and record the webinar with the open captions. Alternatively, a transcript can be made first and captions can be added to the video after the webinar has been presented.

**PowerPoint Presentations (i.e., training presentations or slides with an audio track): captions are required.** In some cases, when the audio is strictly a reading of the slides with some minimal additional language, transcripts can be used in lieu of captions and must be added to the notes section of the slide. When presentations have audio content that is not shown on slides, please provide a clear notice of this and indicate where the captions or transcript can be found. Captions and transcripts must be “synchronized” with the content on each slide.

## Captioning Requirements (continued)

**Video recordings for documentation:** *captions are generally not required.* Briefings or other recordings made for documentation purposes are not considered “training or informational videos” and do not need to be captioned. For example, a video recorded by a field investigator to document safety violations does not need to be captioned. However, if the video is incorporated into webinars, trainings, etc., please follow the captioning requirements for that event type.

**EPA multimedia on EPA’s website or third-party websites such as YouTube:** *captioning is required* for EPA multimedia such as videos, live streaming events, and trainings.

EPA is generally not responsible for captioning multimedia presentations that are not developed by EPA and which EPA simply provides links to non-EPA websites for informational purposes unless those presentations are to be used for EPA training, presentations, etc.

EPA’s Office of Multimedia (OM) within the Office of the Administrator (AO) provides guidance on how to caption multimedia presentations for [EPA’s YouTube channel](#); visit [YouTube Caption Guidelines](#) for more information.

## Arranging for Captioning

### What do I use – CART or transcripts to make captions?

The type of captioning used (CART, open or closed captions, etc.) will vary depending on the type of event and audience needs.

Transcripts do not substitute for captions and are typically used to develop captions or to supplement recorded audio-only events.

### How much does CART or captioning services cost?

There is no general Agency fund to provide captioning. The cost of CART services typically ranges from \$100 to \$300 per hour, depending on factors such as the output method, equipment involved, the type of event, the experience of the CART provider, and whether the service is being provided onsite or from a remote location. Prices vary for captioning services from a company that adds synchronized captions to multimedia presentations after they are presented because of transcript needs and other technical considerations.

### How long does it take to arrange for CART or captioning services?

It is important to plan for captioning early. CART services should be arranged well before an event (at least several days to a week in advance). Captioning services to develop transcripts and add captions may take longer.

### Where can I get CART or captioning services?

**Vendors.** Vendors are available across the country and do not have to be based in the same geographic area, where the meeting is occurring, to provide captioning services. An online search can help you identify these vendors or you may access [GSA’s IT Schedule 70](#) to find pre-negotiated rates for captioning/CART services. In some cases, purchase cards may be used to secure vendor services if the costs are within purchase card limits.



**Contractors.** Existing EPA contractors may be able to provide captioning services, although the current statement of work may need to be updated to reflect these new support requirements.

**Working Capital Fund (WCF).** The WCF provides a variety of support services including [conference and meeting planning](#). For more information visit <http://intranet.epa.gov/ocfo/wcf/>

**Office of Multimedia (OM).** OM provides an agency contract for captioning. The fee is typically about \$300 per hour of captions and requires a week’s notice. For more information refer to [OM 508 Compliance Guidelines](#). OM contact page: <http://intranet.epa.gov/media/contact.htm>

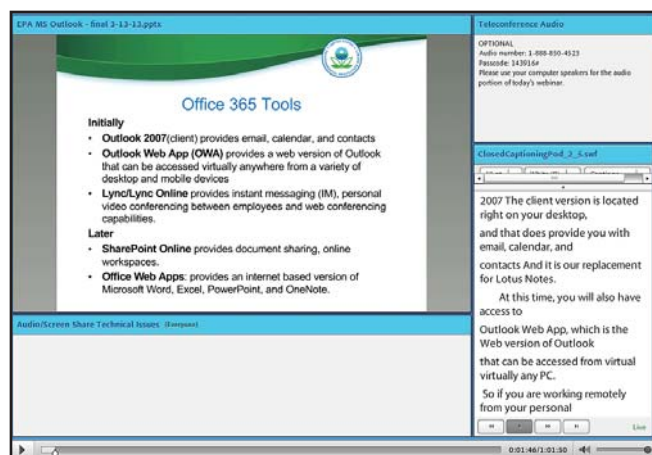


## Other Captioning Logistics

### What if I am using Adobe Connect?

Adobe Connect can support captions. For more information visit [Captioning Guide for Adobe Connect](#) or visit the Closed Captioning - Connect 8 Folder located at <http://workplace.epa.gov/webconferencing.html> Access Adobe Connect > Content > Shared Content > Closed Captioning – Connect 8 folder.

OM provides helpful step-by-step instructions to enable captioning. For more information, refer to [Adobe Connect Captions](#).



*Adobe Connect Screen with closed captioning pod displayed.*

### What about staff meetings and similar events?

Many deaf or hard-of-hearing employees have on-going arrangements for staff meetings and other work events they regularly attend. In such cases, offices do not need to make arrangements for each of those recurring events. Some offices make arrangements for interpreters and CART services for All-Hands Meetings if they have employees who need these services. Sign Language Interpreting Services at EPA Headquarters provides accommodations for deaf and hard-of-hearing employees and members of the public (e.g., applicants for a job) in Washington, D.C. Each office is still responsible for providing captioning for webinars, trainings and other public or large-scale events which Headquarters and Regional employees or members of the public are expected to participate.

### Can we hire an interpreter instead of providing captioning?

No. Captioning and sign language interpreters are not interchangeable. Not everyone with a hearing loss uses sign language to communicate. Many people who are hard-of-hearing do not use sign language. Captions are required because of Section 508 requirements to provide accessibility for those who need it.

### How do we ask if someone needs a reasonable accommodation?

If your event does not require captioning automatically as explained in the “When is captioning required at EPA?” section, but may need to provide captioning, then a notice about how to request a reasonable accommodation should be included on invitations, flyers, or other advertising materials for the event. It can be as simple as the following:

*If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this event, please contact XYZ (name and e-mail) at least a week before the event.*

The person who needs the accommodations is the expert on what he/she needs. The contact person should be prepared to work with the person who is requesting the accommodation to determine how best to meet the individual’s needs.

### If I still have questions, whom should I contact?

For more information about the Section 508 captioning requirements [Section 508 Standards Section 1194.24(c) and (d)], please visit the [Guide to Video and Multimedia Products](#).

Visit EPA’s Section 508 Intranet site at <http://intranet.epa.gov/accessibility> or contact the Section 508 Coordinator at [section508@epa.gov](mailto:section508@epa.gov).

This document is available at [http://intranet.epa.gov/accessibility/captioning\\_factsheet.pdf](http://intranet.epa.gov/accessibility/captioning_factsheet.pdf).